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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Murphy Administration Announces \$8 Million Commitment  
to Help County Jails Treat Opioid Addiction**

(ATLANTIC CITY) – The Murphy Administration today announced an \$8 million investment to partner with county jails to provide medication-assisted treatment to individuals with opioid addiction who are justice-involved while in jail and post-release.

The Administration has identified an urgent need for action to reduce opioid overdose among the justice-involved population, given the tremendous risk for overdose post-release. Studies have suggested the risk for opioid overdose death for people shortly after leaving prison is as much as 129 times that of the general population. The initiative will focus on the use of medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for opioid addiction, which is the clinical standard of care for opioid use disorder.

The New Jersey Department of Human Services and the Department of Corrections, in collaboration with the Department of Health, are making funding available to county correctional facilities to provide MAT to individuals with opioid addiction who are in county jails. The funding will also create the critical community partnerships that will ensure treatment continues post-release. Funding will be allocated in proportion to the size of the

county jail population.

“As the opioid epidemic continues to devastate communities across the state, our Administration is committed to providing critical treatment, such as MAT, for individuals struggling with opioid addiction,” said Acting Governor Sheila Oliver. “This critical investment is another major step in New Jersey’s effort to take bold and aggressive action in order to combat this crisis and help individuals on the road to recovery.”

“Individuals leaving jail are particularly vulnerable to opioid overdose,” Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson said. “It is imperative that we treat people with opioid use disorder with the clinical standard of care before they are released and maintain treatment post-release. We are pleased that the County Wardens are partnering with us in this critical effort to provide MAT in county jails and post-release. We look forward to working together with them to turn the tide of this epidemic.”

This initiative builds on New Jersey’s prison MAT program, where Human Services and the Department of Corrections partner to bring addiction treatment into state prisons. The collaboration is providing peer services that expand pre- and post-release recovery support services to individuals within the Department of Corrections with an opioid use disorder or other substance use, and facilitates continuity of care and treatment that includes comprehensive medical, substance use treatment and social services.

“There is a paradigm shift in the treatment of incarcerated individuals with substance use disorders,” said Department of Corrections Acting Commissioner Marcus O. Hicks, Esq. “With clinically proven medication-assisted treatment and a continuum of services post-release, this initiative offers sustainable solutions to address addiction issues plaguing people in our state’s criminal justice system - reducing recidivism rates, enhancing public safety while expanding services to those who can truly benefit from this treatment.”

“At the end of the day, we need to save lives. These medications save lives,” said Acting Department of Health Acting Commissioner Judith Persichilli. “Individuals who take them are less likely to die from overdose or other addiction-related causes, less likely to inject drugs or transmit or contract infectious diseases, and more likely to stay in treatment longer and enjoy better long-term outcomes.”

A pilot program in Atlantic County supported by the Departments of Human Services and Corrections through which the Atlantic County jail is already providing medication-assisted treatment to individuals in the facility with opioid use disorder and connecting them to treatment post-release. The county jail partners with the John Brooks Recovery Center on this initiative.

“We are extremely thankful and grateful for this partnership opportunity to receive this \$8 million commitment to assist our addicted inmate population in need of MAT services,” said Gloucester County Warden Eugene Caldwell, president of the New Jersey County Jail

Association. “Each county jail will now be able to provide this well needed service as part of the change in our day-to-day responsibilities, as we now envision ourselves as a Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. All of today’s success would not have happened if it wasn’t for the working relationships and partnerships between the Wardens Association, NJDOC, NJDHS and the NJDOH along with the dedication each agency has provided to achieve this amazing investment. Each county jail can make a difference but together with this partnership, we can a make change in someone’s life.”

“Commissioner Johnson has taken a bold necessary step in partnering with our county jails to provide MAT to addicted persons,” said former Governor James E. McGreevey, who is chairman of the New Jersey Reentry Corporation, a nonprofit that works to remove barriers to employment for citizens returning from incarceration. “Our clients are vulnerable, their resistance is low, and their drug cravings are high. Having MAT will help persons survive and stabilize those first few weeks outside of jail. It’s the difference between survival and a ‘second chance’ at sobriety. Commissioner Carole Johnson is saving lives.”

The announcement was part of a daylong NJ Human Services-sponsored summit on the opioid epidemic held at the Atlantic City Convention Center, where nearly 500 members of the medical community are gathering to share best practices in treating opioid use disorder.

It came during a panel entitled “Justice-Involved MAT,” focused on treatment of individuals who are incarcerated or formerly incarcerated and includes a discussion with Commissioners Johnson, Hicks and Persichilli; McGreevey; Caldwell II; Camden County Jail Warden Karen Taylor; Atlantic County Jail Deputy Warden Michael Kelly and Dr. Rachel Haroz, Assistant Professor, Department of Emergency Medicine at Cooper Medical School of Rowan University.